

Russian Military Appoints New Commander of 'North' Grouping of Forces

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Colonel General Yevgeny Nikiforov (left) and Defense Minister Andrei Belousov (right). **Russian Ministry of Defense**

Russia has appointed a new commander to lead its “North” grouping of forces, the Defense Ministry [said](#) Thursday, confirming earlier reports of a leadership change in the military formation tasked with securing border regions from Ukrainian incursions.

The announcement came during Defense Minister Andrei Belousov’s inspection of the grouping, where the newly appointed commander, Colonel General Yevgeny Nikiforov, briefed him on plans to equip units with high-tech weapons.

State media footage showed Nikiforov at Belousov’s side as officers displayed drones and other equipment, before accompanying the minister at a medal-awarding ceremony.

The “North” grouping was formed in early 2024 and deployed after Ukrainian forces staged a

surprise cross-border incursion into the Kursk region that August. Russian military bloggers [say](#) its broader objective is to bog down Ukrainian troops in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions while preparing for gradual advances toward the city of Sumy.

Nikiforov commanded the Western Military District from January 2023 until its dissolution in February 2024. He briefly led Russian forces in Syria in 2021. He replaces Colonel General Alexander Lapin, who earlier this month was [reported](#) by pro-war bloggers to have resigned due to health problems.

Lapin, who commanded the “Center” grouping during Ukraine’s recapture of the Donetsk region city of Lyman in 2022, was [heavily criticized](#) at the time by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and late Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. He was later reassigned as chief of staff of Russia’s Ground Forces in 2023.

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